DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 418 SO 030 068

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TITLE The Search for Truth: An Editor's Perspective.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 18p.; Paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (St. Louis, MO, November 10, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Editors; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Reference Materials; *Research Tools; Social Science Research; *Social Studies

ABSTRACT

The editor of the 'Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning" outlines the reasoning behind and the anticipated content of the handbook. The volume discusses the following topics: audience; scope; style; dimensions of social studies; teachers; students; contexts of social studies education; subject and objectives components; components of instruction; social studies and other curriculum areas; and international perspectives. An appendix outlines the sections and chapters of the handbook. (DB)

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THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH: AN EDITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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Paper prepared for presentation at a College and University Faculty Assembly General Session Symposium on "The Search for Truth: Views from the Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning", at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, St. Louis, November 10, 1989.

When David Naylor, Chairman of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Publications Committee, called on September 15, 1987, to ask if I would be the editor of a handbook of research on teaching social studies (sponsored by NCSS and to be published by Macmillan), my immediate response was one of hesitation and perplexity. My immediate writing plans revolved around the need to prepare articles to get into the literature the results of a meta-analysis of the research on modifying attitudes towards persons with disabilities that I and three colleagues had just completed (Shaver, Curtis, Jesunathadas, & Strong, 1987, 1989). Furthermore, as an occasional critic of the research on social studies education, (e.g., Shaver & Larkins, 1973; Shaver 1979, 1982; Shaver & Norton, 1980), I was not convinced that there were enough quality findings available to justify a handbook.

As I debated with myself for a couple of days, deciding whether to take on the task, it occurred to me that, as is so often the case, the problem was an opportunity. That is, the very lack of quality research that made me hesitant about editing a research handbook made the preparation of the handbook all the more urgent as an effort to improve the worth of future research.

From that perspective, the handbook had to be structured to address not only what is known from past research and what research is needed, but research methods and approaches themselves. As I struggled to develop a conception of the handbook, including an outline of proposed chapters that I wanted to propose to the Editorial Advisory Board* at a meeting on January 22-23, 1988, in Washington, D. C., those three structural elements were paramount in my mind.

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*The members of the Editorial Advisory Board (selected by the NCSS Publications Committee) are: Beverly Armento, Georgia State University; Catherine Cornbleth, State University of New York at Buffalo (who was unable to attend the meeting); Jean Fair, retired from Wayne State University and a past-president of NCSS; Thomas Popkewitz, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Stephen J. Thornton, University of Delaware; and William W. Wilen, Kent State University (Publications Committee representative).

A section on methodology was deemed crucial. And, it seemed evident that the section heading should indicate that epistemology was a serious underlying concern, because methods need to be thought of in the context of attendant assumptions about how we can know about the realities of social studies education. It also seemed vital to ask that the authors of the handbook chapters on various aspects of social studies education address particularly salient methodological issues in their topical areas, as well as review the research and indicate important research directions.

Audience

The primary audience for the handbook, I assumed, would be those who might be expected to do research on social studies--doctoral students, university professors, and some school district researchers. Not necessarily a highly research-sophisticated group, but the essential one if research in the area is to gain in quantity and quality. The handbook, I thought, should be a "first source" for that group, with the purpose of stimulating and guiding research and making research efforts more productive. An important secondary audience would be those who might turn to the handbook for an update on the research knowledge pertinent to a particular interest or task that they faced, such as the development of a curriculum or an instructional program. Although much would be pertinent to practioners, the Handbook was clearly not to be a "how-to-do-it" volume.

Scope

The title for the handbook presented to me from the NCSS Publications Committee was The Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning, a rather cumbersome appellation that I have come to accept. In fact, my efforts

to come up with a substitute have not been successful because none captured the dual, complementary emphasis on teaching and learning.

In that context, to delineate the boundaries of the handbook I decided to propose the use of the common definition of social studies as the central construct, rather than the broader social education definition--that is, to focus on curriculum and instruction, preschool through the 12th grade, rather than on all social learning relevant to the common goals of social studies education. The title, however, suggested that the impact of what students learn out of school on the accomplishment of common social studies goals should not be ignored, and the influence on the curriculum of factors outside of the school had to be acknowledged. Citizenship as a central aim of social studies was also decided on as a guiding theme for authors.

Style

My perspective also included agenda items related to the actual writing of chapters for the handbook. One was to encourage authors to abandon the illogical and dysfunctional reliance on statistical significance as an indicator of the magnitude and importance of results. While mention of statistical significance would not be precluded, in conformance with research ritual, authors would be urged to report effect sizes--metrics of magnitude of result not dependent on sample size or scale of measurement--wherever pertinent and possible. Secondly, I wanted to strive for a clear, direct writing style that would be both comprehensible and interesting, and that could serve as a model of research writing for doctoral students and other interested reporters of research.

The Contents

The above perspective was shared with the Editorial Advisory Board in a seven-page memo on the subject, "Thinking about the Handbook", sent to the Board prior to our January 1987 meeting. In addition, I prepared a proposed Table of Contents (sections and chapters within the sections, with a brief synopsis of possible content for each proposed chapter), along with a listing of the potential authors for each chapter, to serve as a basis for discussion at the evening and day-long meeting.

As might be expected from what has been said above, the first section in my proposed Table of Contents was labeled, "Issues of Epistemology, Research Strategy, and Methodology", later shortened to "Issues of Epistemology and Methodology". As I thought about what should go in that section, it was clear, first of all, that the handbook should be a source book on different research approaches, concurrently addressing issues in regard to how knowledge about social studies teaching and learning can be established. Clearly then, the multiple perspectives on research that have been developing in education generally, as well as in social studies education in particular, had to be represented. While the traditional empirical-analytic, quantitative approach could not be ignored, neither could the newer qualitative and critical approaches. Conversely, the scarcity of historical inquiry on social studies suggested the need for a chapter on historiography.

Because of the central position of textbooks in social studies education, content analysis also seemed to be a relevant methodological area. Moreover, the lack of clarity about the role of theory in educational research, and in social studies research in particular, merited particular attention. In addition, philosophical analysis as a mode of inquiry would be a crucial topic,

in terms of applications to the development of clear conceptualizations of social studies and derivations of instruction and curriculum from such conceptualizations, as well as to the conduct of research itself (see, e.g., Scriven, 1988). With the recent emphasis on quantitative reviews of research as a potential means of extracting knowledge from assorted past research reports, that also seemed to be a legitimate topic. The valid assessment of dependent variables and the oft-ignored definition and assessment of independent variables also merited treatment. Finally, the relationship of research to curricular decisions and to policy making about social studies struck me as an important area that has not been addressed specifically in social studies.

The section that resulted from the Editorial Advisory Board meeting is presented in the Appendix to this paper. Chapters on the role of theory, philosophical inquiry, historiography, critical research, qualitative research, quantitative research, reviewing research from a quantitative perspective, and evaluation and policy studies were still in the outline after the meeting with the Editorial Advisory Board. Proposed chapters on the assessment of dependent variables and on the definition and assessment of independent variables were dropped, on the assumption that they would be discussed in a number of other places in the handbook. In addition, chapters on content analysis and the quality of research in social studies were dropped, on the same premise.

Dimensions of Social Studies

The next question in considering what chapters might be included in the handbook was what dimensions of social studies education should be addressed. Two obviously necessary components of social studies are the students and the teachers. Each merited a separate section. It also seemed essential that even if social studies was defined in terms of curriculum and instruction, rather than

broadly in terms of social education, the handbook had to recognize that learning and teaching in social studies take place in a number of contexts, and that research on the influence of those contexts on what happens and what is learned in social studies should be encouraged. That would be another section. The various subject-matter components of social studies (such as history) and common objectives (such as skills of thinking and decision making) also seemed to merit specific consideration in a section, as did the particular components of instruction (such as textbooks) that are or could be utilized in social studies. Finally, it seemed important to encourage research on the interrelations between social studies and other curricular areas, a topic not often delved into in treatises on social studies. Each of these sections, as well as one additional section added to the handbook as a result of the Editorial Advisory Board meeting, are reviewed next.

Teachers. I proposed that the section on Teachers in Social Studies Education should include chapters on teacher education, the effects of teacher characteristics, teacher decision-making, and conceptions of teacher competence. During the Editorial Advisory Board's deliberations, it was decided that there should be an introductory chapter on the conceptualization of research on the teaching of social studies--the lead chapter in Section II of the outline in the Appendix. It was also decided that both because it would be instructive for those interested in research on teaching and teacher education, and because we wanted to encourage historical thinking in social studies in light of the commitment to history as a crucial element of social studies content, chapters on history of teaching in social studies and on the history of teacher education should be added.

Students. Six chapters evolved in my contemplation of what to propose to the Editorial Advisory Board for the section on students. I proposed two on students' developmental and other characteristics--one dealing with preschool and primary-grades students, the other with middle school and secondary school students. I also suggested chapters on culturally diverse students, on students with disabilities, on slow learners and nonschool-oriented students, and on gifted students.

The section that emerged from the Editorial Advisory Board meeting was somewhat different. It was decided to have three chapters on students' cognitive, emotional, and social development--one on early childhood, another on elementary and middle school students, and a third on secondary school students. The chapters on culturally diverse students and on gifted students were kept. It was decided, however, that rather than separate chapters on students with disabilities and slow learners, there should be one chapter on social studies for students who are at-risk and/or who have disabilities. The question of whether to have a separate chapter on gender in social studies was also discussed. It was decided that rather than a separate chapter, authors should be encouraged to deal with issues of gender in research in every chapter, as appropriate.

Contexts of social studies education. As I prepared the outline for the Editorial Advisory Board meeting, I considered the number of contexts within which social studies education occurred and which could be the subject of individual chapters: The school as a setting; the home as an influence; peers as influences; the mass media; testing as a factor influencing teaching and learning; differences in national context, as well as the influence of communities, local to national; goals and objectives; and scope and sequence.

One outcome of the Editorial Advisory Board discussions was the decision that this section, like the one on teachers, should have a chapter to set context for the discussion of context--such a chapter is the first in Section IV in the Appendix. Chapters on school structure and the influence of student peer groups were agreed on, as were chapters on the home, mass media, testing, and communities, local to national. The separate chapters that I proposed on goals and objectives and on scope and sequence as contexts for social studies education were combined into one chapter.

Discussion of the proposed chapter on national contexts for social studies education developed into consideration of the need for a more pronounced international perspective on research on social studies in the handbook. We soon concluded that unless dealt with explicitly, an international dimension was not likely to be adequately evident in the handbook. Consequently, it was decided to add a section on international perspectives, to which I will return shortly.

Subject and objectives components. The outcome components of social studies that I proposed to the Editorial Advisory Board as chapter topics included: thinking and decision making; moral development; concept development; affective aims, including values and attitudes; and social action and political participation. I also proposed treatments of the subject-matter areas that are the main content sources or foci of courses in social studies--history, government and civics, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology--and I raised the question whether they should be dealt with separately or in an integrative fashion, perhaps in one major chapter. The consensus was clear that the subject-matter areas should be dealt with separately, as should special areas such as multi-cultural education and international education.

The resulting set of chapters for this section was not too divergent from my original list of suggestions. Included were chapters on thinking and decision-making; affective aims, including values, empathy, and moral development; on knowledge and concept development (knowledge was added to emphasize that not only concepts, but facts, are important in social studies), and social and political participation. In addition, chapters were included on the subjects of history, geography, economics, and (in one chapter) anthropology, sociology, and psychology. The title for the chapter on government was expanded to include civics and law-related education. Chapters on international understanding and multi-cultural education were included. And because of the central place of controversial issues in citizenship education, a chapter was added on that topic.

Components of instruction. I proposed that this be Section VII of the handbook, but the Editorial Advisory Board recommended that it be moved forward to follow Section V (on social studies outcomes). The six chapters for this section that resulted from the meeting paralleled my proposal to the Editorial Advisory Board. It seemed to me that first of all there had to be a chapter on classroom discourse and interaction as that is the heart of instruction in social studies. Secondly, there had to be a chapter on textbooks, given the common agreement that they are the central material for and focus of instruction. Instructional media can be an important element in instruction, and their use and research on their use should be encouraged. Games and simulations have not been a particularly popular topic in social studies in recent years, yet their potential and the questions raised about them seemed to merit a separate chapter. The organization of classrooms for instruction also seemed to me to merit a chapter, as did the notion of using out-of-classroom and out-of-school

activities--i.e., community participation--as an element of instruction.

Social studies and other curriculum areas. The section that I had proposed as Section VI became Section VII, with basically the elements that I had suggested. Given the often expressed concern that social studies should help students develop appreciations and understanding that go beyond cognitively based materials, a chapter on art, music, and literature in the social studies seemed crucial. By the same token, the emerging of technological and scientific influences on society made important a chapter on science, mathematics, and social studies. Because reading is so essential to social studies and to citizenship education, a chapter on research on reading and social studies was included. Writing was another curricular area that seemed crucial, because it is not merely a mode of expression, but a potentially important citizenship activity, as well as a way of learning and of knowing what one has learned.

International perspectives. The Editorial Advisory Board was correct that a section on international perspectives on research on social studies should be included in the handbook, and it is the final one. That important section in the handbook will, I believe, be of considerable interest to the anticipated audiences as well as expand the group to which the handbook will be of interest. In addition, all authors were to be encouraged to include research on social studies conducted in countries other than the United States as available and pertinent for their chapters.

The chapters agreed on, as listed in the Appendix, were on cross-national research and research in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Why not chapters, for example, on research in Canada and Australia? Space was a serious consideration. Moreover, hoping not to sound imperialistic, the Editorial Advisory Board and I thought that research in those two countries would

be captured as part of the review of the research literature in English-language journals.

Conclusion

The above is a sketch of the reasoning behind and the anticipated content of the handbook. It should be evident that the conception of the handbook evolved from my own thinking, as expressed in a proposal to the Editorial Advisory Board meeting, and through the deliberations on that proposal--and it has continued to evolve since.

When the Handbook is finally published, you will find that all chapter titles are not the same as listed in the Appendix. In fact, in a few instances, chapters dealing with particular topics will not be present. As I am sure you can appreciate, chapter titles are partly a function of the perspectives that particular authors bring to bear on their topics. Whether a chapter appears or not has to do with the dependability of the author or authors who agreed to take it on. That raises another issue not within the scope of this meeting today, the ethics of academic-professional publishing, that I hope to raise at a future such gathering.

Surely, the contents of the Handbook could have been different, and if in 10 years another edition of the Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning is prepared, I would expect that the contents will be considerably different--both because of what worked well and what did not work well in this Handbook, because of the research conducted in the interim, because of new thinking about epistemology and methods, and because of and the changes in the societal context for social studies. Nevertheless, I am optimistic that most readers will find what they are looking for in the Handbook, perhaps in several

different places, as some topics (e.g., qualitative research, criticisms of quantitative studies, textbooks, cooperative learning, and cognitive psychology) are mentioned in several chapters.

Hopefully, the Handbook will not only help interested readers to determine the state of research-based knowledge about social studies education but will help social studies researchers to identify viable research needs and, even more important, to design valid and productive research studies and programs. The Handbook will be even more consequential if it has an impact on the contemplation of issues of epistemology and methodology and on the implementation of research approaches to gain more adequate perspectives on the complicated phenomenon of social studies education.

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APPENDIX

Sections and Chapters in the

Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Following the Editorial Advisory Board Meeting
1/22-23/88

I. Issues of Epistemology and Methodology

1. Theory as a Basis for Research on Social Studies
2. Philosophical Inquiry on Social Studies
3. History of Social Studies
4. Critical Research on Social Studies
5. Naturalistic/Ethnographic Research on Social Studies Education
6. Quantitative Methods in Social Studies Education
7. Reviewing Social Studies Research
8. Evaluation and Policy Studies in Social Studies

II. Teachers in Social Studies Education

9. Conceptions of Teaching Social Studies
10. History of Teaching in Social Studies
11. History of Teacher Education for Social Studies
12. The Education of Social Studies Teachers
13. Teacher Characteristics and Social Studies Education
14. Teacher Decision-Making in Social Studies
15. Teacher Competence for Social Studies

III. The Student in Social Studies Education

16. Students' Development and other Characteristics: Preschool (Early Childhood) Social Studies

17. Students' Developmental and other Characteristics: Elementary-Middle School Social Studies

18. Students' Developmental and other Characteristics: Secondary School Social Studies

19. Culturally Diverse Students and Social Studies

20. Social Studies for Students At-risk and with Disabilities

21. Gifted Students and Social Studies

IV. Contexts of Social Studies Education

22. The Meaning of Context as a Research Issue

23. The School as Setting for Social Studies

24. The Influence of the Home on Social Studies

25. Peers as an Influence in Social Studies

26. The Mass Media as an Influence on Social Studies

27. Testing as Context in Social Education

28. Scope and Sequence, Goals, and Objectives: Effects on Social Studies

29. Communities, Local to National, as Influences on Social Studies Education

V. Teaching and Learning of Social Studies Outcomes

30. Thinking/Decision-Making Objectives in Social Studies

31. Achieving Social Studies Affective Aims: Values, Attitudes, Empathy, Moral Development

32. Knowledge and Concept Development in Social Studies

33. Achieving Social Action and Political Participation Social Studies Outcomes

34. Teaching History

35. Teaching Economics

36. Teaching Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology

37. Teaching Government, Civics, and Law-Related Education

38. Teaching Geography

39. International Education in Social Studies

40. Multi-cultural Education in Education

41. Teaching Controversial Issues

VI. Components of Social Studies Instruction

42. Classroom Discourse/Interaction in Social Studies Classrooms

43. Textbooks as a Social Studies Instructional Tool

44. Interactive Media in Social Studies

45. Gaming and Simulations in Social Studies

46. Classroom Organization for Social Studies

47. School-Community Participation for Social Studies

VII. Interrelations Between Social Studies and Other Curriculum Areas

48. Art, Music, Literature and Social Studies

49. Science/Math and Social Studies

50. Reading for Social Studies

51. Writing for Social Studies

VIII. International Perspectives on Social Studies

52. Cross-National Research in Social Studies

53. Research on Social Studies in Western Europe

54. Research on Social Studies in Eastern Europe

55. Research on Social Studies in Africa

56. Research on Social Studies in Asia

Appendix 16

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